

# State of Connecticut

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY



### COMMISSION ON CHILDREN

#### **School Readiness: Early Childhood Comprehensive System**

Legislation enacted in the 2005 Legislative Session establishes a new vision for early childhood. Building on the successful School Readiness Program, a new State Cabinet will guide a more birth to five comprehensive system for early childhood to ensure the health, safety and learning of children. Led by Governor M. Jodi Rell and the Commissioner of Education, the Early Childhood Education Cabinet provides a state level governance structure for policy and budget decisions to better co-ordinate and maximize state and federal resources. In addition, community voice will be represented on the Cabinet in a new state/local partnership to better respond to the needs and priorities of children and families.

#### **Summary of the School Readiness Law as Amended by H.B. 6989.**

**H.B. 6989, An Act Concerning Expenditures for the Programs and Services of the Department of Education. Sections 1-14 include sections of H.B. 6949 and S.B. 1339.**

**Section 1:** requires SDE to develop standards for “transition to school” as part of the school readiness program.

**Section 1:** requires **new staff qualifications by July 1, 2015** that include: 1) a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or childhood development or in a related field approved by the Commissioner of Education; or 2) certification pursuant to section 10-145b with an endorsement in early childhood education or special education.

**Section 2:** Adds a representative from a **health care provider** in the community to the School Readiness Council.

**Section 3:** Establishes a new **Early Childhood Education Cabinet** co-chaired by the following or their designees: the Governor and the Commissioners of Education. Members include the Office of Policy and Management; Commissioners of Social Services, Public Health, Children and Families; Mental Retardation, the co-chairmen of Education, and Human Services Committees; the Commission on Children, one person representing a local or regional school readiness council appointed by the Senate President and a representative of the CT Head Start Association appointed by the speaker of the House of Representative.

**Duties of the Cabinet include:**

- 1) advising the Commissioner of Education on School Readiness;
- 2) conducting a longitudinal evaluation of school readiness;
- 3) developing budget requests for early childhood program;
- 4) and promote consistency of quality and comprehensiveness of early childhood services.

(\$450,000 has been allocated for the Cabinet for this purpose )

**Section 4:** Includes “mental health consultant” as part of comprehensive services; designates the use of **Scholarships for training for obtaining a credential in early childhood education** or child development. (deletes “ a child development associate certificate) Adds **providers of care for children** to the definition of supportive network.

**Adds a new purpose for the School Readiness grant:** “ **provide services that enhance the quality of programs to maximize the health, safety and learning of children from birth to three years of age**, including, but not limited to, those children served by informal child care arrangements. Such grants may be used for the improvement of staff to child ratios and interaction, initiatives to promote staff retention, pre-literacy development, parent involvement, curriculum content and lesson plans.

**Section 5: Directs** the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Social Services and the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority **to establish priorities for financing based on need and quality determinants.** ( budget allocates **\$1 million** to the State Treasurers debt service for CHEFA for new or expanded facilities. **\$1 million** is carried over from fiscal year '05. For every \$1 million in debt service, **\$17 million** of new bonds for facilities can be leveraged )

**Section 6:** Requires non-priority school districts who utilize the state **5 percentage point incentive** grant to add pre-school space in new or expansion projects to **maintain full-day pre-K enrollment for at least ten years.**

**Section 7: Expands** the current school construction bonus of **10 percentage points** to new construction or expansion to **full-day preschool programs in priority school districts or a priority school.** Currently there are 19 school districts in this category with the addition of Norwich this year. School districts must maintain full-day preschool enrollment for at least ten years.

**Section 8:** Raises the floor or base in per child cost of the Department of Education School Readiness component of the program offered by a school readiness provider not to exceed six thousand four hundred to **six hundred fifty dollars.**

**Section 9:** Commissioner of Education shall develop a **kindergarten assessment tool** that measures a child’s level of preparedness for kindergarten. ( **\$400,000** in fiscal year '07 for this purpose)

**Section 10: Opens school readiness programs** to towns ranked **one to fifty** instead of **one to twenty-eight**. Towns in this category can receive \$107,000 per priority school- total budget allocation is **\$832,000**)

**Section 11:** Allows the Commissioner of Education to provide **technical assistance** and training to school readiness programs to assist in the application of preschool curriculum guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education

Section 12: Directs the early childhood education center at **Eastern Connecticut State University to work with local and regional school readiness councils to address their childcare and early education needs**. The university must report to the Department of Education on the results of their work. ( **\$450,000** is allocated to Eastern )

**Budget Allocation for School Readiness in the Priority School District Grant:**

**Section 35: Fiscal year '06- '07**

(a) 1) \$34,538,308 for priority school districts; 2) **for school readiness \$48,516,500;** 3) for early readiness success \$19,747,286; 4) for extended school building day hours \$2,994,752, and 5) for school accountability in the amount \$3,499,699.

**Fiscal year '07- '08**

(b) 1) for priority school districts \$35,862,269; 2) **for school readiness \$51,006,500;** 3) for early reading success \$19,747,286; extended school building hours \$2,994,752, and 5) for school accountability \$3,499,699.